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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/12/2016
TAGS: HA PGOV PREL UNSC
SUBJECT: PREVAL TRIES TO DODGE ISSUE OF VENEZUELA AND UNSC
SEAT

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.5 (d).

¶1. (C) In our early morning meeting July 10 (other topics reported septel), President Preval carefully circumvented any detailed discussion of CARICOM support for Venezuela's bid for a UNSC seat. He outright refused to say if Haiti would join a CARICOM consensus. Noting that Haiti took no active role in the Summit discussions on the topic, Preval launched into a long (for him) discussion of Guatemala's political shortcomings, including its border dispute with Belize and the issue of bananas. Preval seemed somewhat bemused that bananas proved to be such a discussion topic, but noted the trade issue clearly swayed some of the participants at the meeting. He repeatedly pressed me on why the US is so concerned about Chavez's government being on the Council. Although he did not try to excuse Chavez's behavior, he claimed that the Venezuelan President is "no real threat to you... he is afraid of elections in the hemisphere. They are turning out his friends. Look at Mexico." However, he deflected my assertions that Venezuela would be a disruptive element on the Council as it has been in the region. All that aside, Preval carefully stressed again his understanding that this is an important issue to the US and agreed to discuss it again with me closer to the vote in October. He also reiterated his desire not to get Haiti in the middle between the US and Venezuela. "We need all our friends now."

¶2. (C) Comment. Preval's efforts to be coy notwithstanding, Haiti will, I am certain, join the CARICOM consensus to vote for Venezuelan candidacy. Preval is not enamoured of Chavez; however, he does believe he needs Venezuelan support -- as well as American -- to move Haiti forward. Thus his effort, transparent though it may be, to carefully walk the line.

SANDERSON